

Wolitski RJ, and the Project START Study Group [presenters: Eldridge GD, Morrow KM, Seal, DW, Wolitski RJ, Zack B]. Developing interventions for young men being released from prison: research findings and lessons learned from Project START. Symposium at the National HIV Prevention Conference; August 2001; Atlanta, Georgia. Abstract 404.

Background: There are relatively few prevention programs that work with incarcerated men despite the fact that they are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS, STDs, and hepatitis B and C.

Objectives: To present formative results from Project START, a CDC-funded four-site study of 18-29 year old men about to be released from prison, including: (1) provider views of men's HIV/STD/Hepatitis risk and preventive behavior and prevention needs; (2) assessment of the frequency and context of men's HIV/STD/Hepatitis risk behavior before and after their incarceration; (3) recruitment and retention strategies; and (4) implications of these findings and lessons learned for HIV/STD/Hepatitis prevention.

Methods: Across the four sites, a total of 99 qualitative interviews were conducted with providers who work with men who have been incarcerated. Qualitative and quantitative interviews were conducted with 116 incarcerated men prior to their release. Follow-up interviews were scheduled 1-week, 1-month, 3-months, and 6-months after release with 110 men who were released from prison. Retention rates for the interviews ranged from 81% to 88%. Most of the men in the sample were African American (55%) or White (28%). Mean length of incarceration was 3.2 years. The majority of men were single, and 61% had less than a high school education.

Results: Providers believed men were at-risk for HIV/STDs/Hepatitis after release from prison because of multiple, casual, and at-risk sexual partners; infrequent condom use; and sex in conjunction with substance use. The young men reported high rates of alcohol and marijuana use before and after incarceration and of cocaine use before incarceration. They also reported high rates of multiple, casual, and at-risk sexual partners and of sex in conjunction with substance use. Few men reported condom use or injection drug use. Qualitative data from providers and the men highlight individual, interpersonal, situational, and structural influences on behavior.

Conclusions: Despite the challenges of working with correctional institutions, research studies and prevention programs that start while men are incarcerated and continue after their release are feasible. The study findings and lessons learned by the research teams have important implications for reducing HIV, STD, and Hepatitis risk among incarcerated persons.